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ABSTRACT

High school counselors have the mission to advise students, especially ethnic minority students, of projected labor shortages. Today's high school students also need to become more career oriented, and not limited to just looking for a job. This study examined the extent to which career guidance and counseling are delivered to senior high school students, career guidance and counseling is in need of additional emphasis, and there are differences in career guidance and counseling delivery relative to ethnicity. Subjects (N=295) were senior high school students, nearly evenly divided between African-American and Anglo-American students. Subjects completed an instrument called "Debunking Occupational Myths: A Quiz" to assess their irrational perceptions of general career awareness. The results suggested that subjects tended to display weak career perceptions across cultures, gender, grade level, and area of school and residence. The turmoil of adolescence and the search for self-identity have prompted many career theorists to caution against early career decisions. Students may not have processed enough relevant information before the senior year to warrant an actual decision-making process. High school students may not be receiving adequate or appropriate career education. The lack of efficacious career education to high school students, especially for ethnic minorities, can be disastrous for their futures. (ABL)

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SENIOR HIGH CAREER COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE STRATEGIES: ARE THEY VERY EFFECTIVE?

[Roger D. Herring]

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Labor forecasters have predicted current labor shortages may extend well into the 21st century (Olney, 1988). These shortages will be evident for both entry-level employees (to whom employers are willing to give on-the-job training) and employees with various educational prerequisites. High school counselors have the mission to advise students, especially ethnic minority students, of these projected labor shortages. Today's high school students also need to become more career oriented, and not just looking for a job (Deer, 1988).

Many career development strategies fail to consider cultural differences of minority students. Research indicates that the average minority student displays differences from the average nonethnic student in background experience, learning styles, values, and career orientations (Herring, 1990; More, 1989; Rhodes, 1988; Williams, 1979). Failure of counselors to incorporate ethnic, cultural, and physical differences results in ethnic students entering very restricted career areas.

This article presents research data which indicate that career guidance and counseling efforts may not be as effective as educators or parents may believe. In addition, some suggestions will offered to assist career counselors in

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their career developmental efforts, especially with ethnic students. Prior to those discussions, perhaps a brief review of important factors influencing all high school students will be presented.

MAJOR FACTORS INFLUENCING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS'S CAREER DEVELOPMENT

A multitude of factors affect high school students in their career decision-making process. The more dominant factors involve adolescence identity issues, familial influences, career myths, and assessment devices. Cultural and ethnical concerns will be integrated as well.

Adolescent Turmoil. The career decision process is extremely troublesome for most high school students. This process has been described "... a trial of one's identity" (Kimeldorf, 1986, p. 31). The search for self-identity and independence is compounded by influences from forces such as the maturation of secondary sexual characteristics and the intensification of peer support rather than support from family, school or church. For example, students feel a need for support and guidance from parents during their career decision-making but they also experience a need for independence. Students become stalemated by this autonomy and separation conflict. Tension is created by this concern for parents and the need to become independent. The result of this tension is that many students tend to avoid career

choices suggested by their parents in order to establish their autonomy. Thus, good advice is often ignored and premature decisions may result.

Some high school students successfully navigate the turbulence of adolescence as they experience career development. However, many do not and they are the ones who ultimately will suffer from inappropriate or premature career decisions.

Familial Influences. A very viable factor affecting adolescents and their career development exists in family dynamics. Miller's (1987) study indicated that at least one-third of high school students select parents or other relatives as persons most helpful in career choice. Yet, a recent study found a significant discrepancy between the students' and their parents' perceptions of degree of parental influence (Reschke & Knierim, 1987). Most parents perceived their influence was moderate to low, while most students felt their parental influence to be high. Recent research has demonstrated that excessive family influence can produce indecisive adolescents who display lower self esteems and higher anxiety levels than adolescents from less influencing families (Brigman, Noble, & Kinnier, 1990).

Family involvement with career decision may prevent the normal development of a self identity. Cultural influences place additional stress on today's adolescents' identity

development. Ethnic familial types and childrearing patterns do not match the educational views of most institutions. Ethnic adolescents experience a high degree of stress as they switch from one cultural focus to another. Then too, the lower socioeconomic status of most ethnic families tends to further hinder positive career guidance. These influences are often reflected in ethnic students' making poor career choices.

Career Myths. Many high school students, especially ethnic minorities, are not aware of career myths (irrational career thoughts) which they have internalized (Herring, 1990; Liptak, 1989). Such concepts as "I have to decide before graduation!" or "I can't enter that career!" reflect a student's lack of unbiased career awareness. These comments also infer a lack of an internal locus of control in these students. Cultural and ethnical factors amplify these irrational career ideations.

Many ethnic minority students seldom are exposed to positive role models during their educational experiences. Guidance posters and bulletin boards often display abundant portrayals of Black athletes but few Black doctors or lawyers are seen. Native American, Spanish American, and Asian American students have even less exposure to positive career role models. Textbooks continue to present negative stereotypes of ethnic minorities to students as well.

For example, Kenschaft (1988) presented eight myths which deter students from pursuing math careers. A main implication from this research is that students have an erroneous perception that math skills are a result of talent and not practice. This study also indicated that many elementary teachers possess a bias against math because of their personal lack of ability or training to make math more alluring to themselves or their students. Another study dealing with gender differences among African-American students from low socioeconomic status indicated that African-American males and females both prefer "...highly visible, traditional sex-stereotyped occupations..." (Miller & Stanford, 1987, p. 117).

The persistence of math and gender career myths, and similar perceptions about other career areas, hinder if not negate appropriate career awareness and exploration for the ethnic minority student.

Assessment Devices. The efficacy of testing and assessment devices has been debated for decades. Are assessment instruments culturally and ethnically bias? Much of the research has indicated that they are indeed (Herring, 1989; Sharma, 1986). Primarily, the biases involve the assumptions that all students are fluent in English and that they have had a high degree of exposure to Anglo-American culture. Research has also indicated that remedial efforts,

especially reading improvement, seems to be less effective for ethnic minority groups (Serow & Davis, 1982).

The continued use of biased assessment tools impact the educational experiences of ethnic students. Research has reinforced this continuation. Yet, this practice apparently continues to be allowed in public education.

RESEARCH STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which (a) career guidance and counseling are delivered to senior high school students, (b) career guidance and counseling is in need of additional emphasis, and (c) there are differences in career guidance and counseling delivery relative to ethnicity.

Participants. A total of 295 senior high students participated in this study: 9 tenth graders, 10 eleventh graders, and 84 twelfth graders. The sample included nearly equal numbers of males and females from diverse backgrounds (ethnicity, rural, urban, socioeconomic). (see Table 1). The participants were also nearly equally divided between African- American and Anglo-American students. The participants represented four public high schools in central Arkansas. The participants were intact classes and not randomly selected. Parental consent was obtained for this activity.

PLACE TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Procedure. The participating senior high students were given the "Debunking Occupational Myths: A Quiz" (Miller, 1987) to assess their irrational perceptions of general career awareness. This ten-item survey instrument was selected because of its short length and its focus on career myth identification. Reliability and validity support for this newly developed instrument is currently being developed. The survey was administered by counselors during a regularly scheduled guidance activity period. Any item or word that presented difficulty to students' understanding was read or defined. Site conditions were consistent with those required for testing situations.

PLACE CHART A ABOUT HERE

Assessments of frequency distribution of the sample population, frequency of the total number of items answered incorrectly, frequency of the total number of items answered incorrectly by grade, and the frequency of individual items answered incorrectly are included. Limitations for generalization may be noted for small percentages of tenth and eleventh grades, private schools, and some minorities.

Limitations resulting from the lack of random selection and the use of nonvolunteers can be disallowed. The efficacy of using intact groups and nonvolunteers, especially within educational sites, are permissable when the researcher has no alternatives (Gage, 1985).

PLACE TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Results. Table 2 shows the frequency distribution of the number of items answered incorrectly for each of the variables. Results indicated that on the average, tenth graders answered incorrectly four items whereas 11th and 12th graders, on the average, answered three items incorrectly. Tenth grade males tended to respond incorrectly on six items whereas 10th grade females tended to respond incorrectly on four items. On the average, 11th and 12th grade males and females tended to respond incorrectly on three items.

African-American 10th graders, on the average, tended to respond incorrectly on four items, whereas 11th and 12th graders tended to to respond incorrectly on three items. Anglo-American 12th graders, on the average, responded incorrectly on three items. No significant difference was determined between rural and urban area students.

Table 2 also indicates a mean of 3.68 incorrect responses for the total participants. Incorrect responses decreased on the average as grade level increased for all variables considered.

PLACE TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Table 3 presents the frequency of incorrect responses by grade and item. Eighty percent of the participants responded incorrectly to test items two through five. A quick review of the items in Chart A seems to indicate that senior high school students should have been exposed to the information requested.

Discussion of Research Results

This study presented research findings on a career myth survey administered to 295 senior high school students. The results suggest that the participants in this study tended to display weak career perceptions across cultures, gender, grade level, and area of school and residence.

The large mean of incorrect responses, on the average of four out of 10 items, presents several indications. These participants may not have received adequate career guidance exposure during their school experience; or they may not have internalized career information presented to them. These results may also indicate that the instrument

used suffered from insufficient reliability, validity, and length. However, the 10 items do correspond with career content mandated by the state department of education to be covered in the public schools at an earlier grade level.

The forces of adolescence and the search for self identity have prompted many career theorists to caution against early career decisions. Students may not have processed enough relevant information before the senior year to warrant an actual decision-making process. For example, seniors in one study did not know exactly what they based their career preferences on (Miller, 1987). Results of this study indicated that many students also displayed confusion between explicit and implicit importance of career areas.

Researchers have also studied the relationships among ascribed and achieved traits of careers by high school students. In one longitudinal study, researchers found that high school grade point average (GPA) and willingness to move to opportunities outside of the home area contributed significantly to students' acquisitions of higher status jobs (Miller, 1987). Thus in terms of future career development and decision making, selection of achieved characteristics seem to be more important than ascribed characteristics of career areas to high school students.

Research studies have also indicated that high school students should become more aware of the significant aspects

of occupations, obtain more data about occupations that interest them, and develop more concrete plans for securing both further education and on-the-job training by their high school years (Miller, 1987). Twelfth grade students should also be more knowledgeable about training, educational requirements, and other pertinent information about careers.

The size of the sample certainly allows generalizing to similar students. Future research might use a larger number of urban and private school participants and increased numbers of Asian, Native American, and Spanish American students. Also, a more reputable assessment instrument might be employed. Nevertheless, a greater focus on career awareness and exploration seems to be a viable option for the development of more accurate career perceptions.

Suggestions for for Senior High School Career Counselors

Counselors would be to review and evaluate their local career education programs to ensure that generic adolescence conflicts are being addressed intergratively with career education. For example, the problem of indecision or premature decision may be addressed by activities that help students move from an explicit setting of values to an implicit use of those values in evaluating alternatives.

Questionnaires in small groups often generate useful student dialogue. Career grids can stimulate discussions of the complexities of career decision making and can heighten

awareness of their implicit decisions. These small group activities also have importance to minority students who prefer not to work independently (e.g., African Americans).

School counselors can assist students' recognition of their autonomy versus independence conflict as well (Reschke & Knierim, 1987). For example, a diagram of the various forces affecting the student may enable the student to visualize the forces influencing their decisions. By clarifying these forces, the counselor can help the student proportion the emphasis given to each influence.

As mentioned earlier, the family is the primary emotional system the student ever belongs to and does determine to some degree the course and outcome of his or her life. Counselors could help by providing family members and parents with information and skills needed to advise their children. Some of this information could address the conflict between the drive for independence by adolescents and the pull of remaining loyal to familial wishes.

The school counselor can use irrational beliefs interventions to address the career myths problem (Herring, 1990; Liptak, 1989). The student has to be challenged to develop a career plan. The counselor can stress that there is no one best method of finding a career. Several routes may be taken. The counselor needs to emphasize that the student is in control of the career decision-making. A

another important communication to the student is that rejection is a reality and cannot be changed. For example, if the student is rejected initially, have the students talk with the employers that turned them down for feedback and suggestions.

A guided vocational fantasy has proven to be an effective tool for addressing myths or irrational career thoughts. The students simply fantasize themselves in a particular career. Successful fantasies will lead to student exploration into these fantasized careers. This exercise also aids in the understanding of perceptions and stereotypes about occupations.

Many strategies are available to assist counselors in facilitating career awareness with ethnic minority students with career development. For example, self control may be developed through emphasizing pride in one's ethnicity, identifying successful role models, and receiving adequate peer support and feedback. Ethnic minority students also have limited and often inaccurate information about career choices. Information giving should incorporate more exposure and more accurate information. One strategy could be having the students read a long list of occupations from the Occupational Shopping List (OSL) (Parker & McDavis, 1979) and check one of the responses (like, dislike, unsure, need more information). The counselor could then have the

students research and explore further, depending on their response.

Decision-making skills may be enhanced with the Career Cone Index (CCI) (McDavis & Parker, 1981). This index includes a listing of occupations from the broadest to the narrowest. It requires students to list occupations and discuss certain aspects of the occupation with a counselor. Culturally relevant career guidance materials for either primary or supplementary resources may be developed through scrapbooks containing pictures of successful ethnic minorities and information on their career areas. In addition, slide or tape presentation of successful minority role models can be developed.

Holland (1985) hypothesized that satisfaction with an educational or work environment is related to specific personality types. The Holland hypothesis has been supported using ethnic minority students. For example, Gade, Fuqua, and Hurlburt (1988) found that Native American students with an Investigative or Social personality type code had significantly higher scores on educational satisfaction than students with a Realistic type code. This study further indicated that through vigorous recruitment of Native American teachers and curriculum revision based on the interest patterns of Native-American students, the high

rates of dropout, absenteeism, delinquency, and negative career myths can be reduced.

Assessment devices in the trait and factor tradition, which show connections between personality types, would seem to satisfy the need for organization and integration of occupational information and self-knowledge necessary for minority and majority students (Miller, 1987). A variety of instruments exist that can enhance self understanding and career awareness. Also, volunteer activities can help students learn important facts about jobs and careers. Organizations rich in volunteer opportunities are schools, hospitals, museums, and similar sites.

For example, West's (1988) study indicated that Native Americans scored significantly lower in career maturity when using the Career Maturity Attitude Scale (CMI-AS) Counseling Form B-1 (Crites, 1978). This study's implications were that (a) individual educational plans (IEP) need to be developed for ethnic minority students, and (b) that a correlation between career maturity and grade-point-average exists with ethnic minority students. Career programming from the elementary to the high school level should include plans to better prepare ethnic minority students to obtain the training and education necessary to enter the world of work.

The Vocational Assessment Interviewing Form (VAIF) (McDavis & Parker, 1979) has been proven to be useful for ethnic minority students also. The VAIF consists of 24 items designed to gather information about a student's educational interests, environmental interests, personal qualities, and occupational interests. The counselor reflects the pattern of responses to the student and they proceed in further career exploration and awareness. This exercise results in a general field and evolves into a narrowing process.

Other assessment devices which can be used with any ethnic population are available. Bloch (1989) developed a strategy which incorporates elements of successful career information delivery systems: CASH (the linkage between earned money and school subjects); CARING (providing students with a loving and concerned environment; COMPUTERS (for teaching and record management); and COALITIONS (team teaching and community involvement). Kimeldorf (1986) has established the efficacy of a semester long Job Club. This strategy involves direct instruction, modeling, role playing, feedback, and field experiences to enhance career awareness and exploration.

Carr and Perkoski (1987) suggested that students begin a job search without a plan and then determine

their personal segment of the job market. This activity forms "a window of opportunity" (p. 77) for the student. The student then focuses on a more narrow career area rather than attempting to cover all career areas.

A final suggestion concerns the counseling process from a cross-cultural perspective. Somer (1987) concluded that career development professionals bring certain expectations to a counseling session about the way in which communication will occur. Subsequently, counselors may attach their own cultural meanings to observable aspects such as body language, eye contact, conversational distance, touch, and odor. Somer suggested seven assumptions which counselors should work toward in dealing with students from diverse cultures. Abbreviated forms of these assumptions are:

1. Counselors must clarify where authority or control is to lie in the counseling relationship.
2. Counselors need to determine whether their students see themselves as in charge of own planning or whether they assume that control over their future is held by their society, subgroup, or family.
3. Are the students seeking to absorb what they perceive as American culture while retaining their own?

4. The student is likely to come from a background where advice is never sought from strangers (e.g., Native Americans).
5. Students from certain subcultures will have been reared to view "problems" as synonymous with "weakness" and to feel that weaknesses are never to be admitted
6. Students may not share the counselor's views of career planning as a series of interesting problems waiting to be solved. They may also not share the typically American urgency to find these solutions.

CONCLUSION

The lack of efficacious career education to high school students, especially for ethnic minorities, can be disastrous for their futures. The research results of this study indicate that high school students may not be receiving adequate or appropriate career education. The generalizability of the results may be restricted to regions which share similar characteristics of central Arkansas. Additional research in less similar socioeconomic areas may also be warranted. Regardless, the size of the sample group certainly allows for some generalization.

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Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Participants by Grade, Gender, Ethnicity, Type of School Attended, & Area

(N = 295)

	GRADE LEVEL 10	11	12	Totals
Frequency	9	10	84	103
%	9	10	81	100
Gender				
Male	1	7	44	52
Female	8	3	40	51
Ethnicity				
African American	9	10	35	54
Anglo American	0	0	48	48
Asian American	0	0	0	0
Native American	0	0	1	1
Spanish American	0	0	0	0
Type of School attended				
Public	9	10	84	103
Private	0	0	0	0
Area				
Rural	9	10	31	50
Urban	0	0	53	53

Chart A

Debunking Occupational Myths: A Quiz

1. The goal of career counseling is to find the one perfect occupation (F).

2. Once a decision has been made it should be pursued to the end (F).

3. Although most youngsters are not sure of what they want to do vocationally, most are fairly sure of what they do not want to do or be when they grow up (T).

4. Certain "types" of people seem to be employed in certain "kinds" of work (T).

5. The main purpose of an interest test is to be able to tell a student what occupation he or she should choose (F).

6. Occupational prestige is one factor to consider when selecting an occupation (T).

7. Your worth as a person should be determined by the type of occupation you have (F).

8. Talking with someone actually employed in a job that you find interesting is a good way of finding out about the work world (T).

9. The process of making a decision many times causes feelings of anxiety and self-doubt (T).

10. Deciding on a college major or some type of occupation should be complete by your junior year in high school (F).

Table 2

Mean of Items answered incorrectly by Grade, Gender, Ethnicity, Type of School Attended, and Area

	Grade Level		
Grade Mean	10 (4.33)	11 (3.40)	12 (3.30)
Gender			
Male	6.00	3.43	3.45
Female	4.13	3.33	3.13
Ethnicity			
African American	4.33	3.40	3.57
Anglo American	0.00	0.00	3.15
Asian American	0.00	0.00	0.00
Native American	0.00	0.00	1.00
Spanish American	0.00	0.00	0.00
Type of School			
Public	4.33	3.40	3.30
Private	0.00	0.00	0.00
Area			
Rural	4.33	3.40	3.48
Urban	0.00	0.00	3.19

Table 3

Frequency of Incorrect Responses by Grade and Item

	Value	Frequency	Percent
Grade Level			
10	1.00	1	11.1
(4.33)	2.00	1	11.1
	3.00	1	11.1
	4.00	1	11.1
	5.00	2	22.2
	6.00	2	22.2
	7.00	1	11.1
	Total	9	100.0
11	2.00	3	30.0
(3.40)	3.00	3	30.0
	4.00	3	30.0
	7.00	1	10.0
	Total	10	100.0
12	.00	2	2.4
(3.298)	1.00	9	10.7
	2.00	17	20.2
	3.00	20	23.8
	4.00	16	19.0
	5.00	13	15.5
	6.00	5	6.0
	7.00	1	1.2
	8.00	1	1.2
	Total	84	100.0